

Message Text

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11

ACTION ARA-20

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FM AMEMBASSY MEXICO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 567

C O N F I D E N T I A L MEXICO 2090

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SNAR, MX

SUBJ: AMBASSADOR'S CALL ON SECRETARY OF HEALTH: DRUG-RELATED
ASPECTS

1. AMBASSADOR CALLED ON SECRETARY OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL WELFARE,
DR. JIMENEZ CANTU, ON MARCH 8, 1974. ALSO ATTENDING WAS UNDER-
SECRETARY, DR. CAMPILLO SAINZ. APPROXIMATELY HALF OF 50 MINUTE
CONVERSATION WAS DEVOTED TO THE NARCOTICS PROBLEM.

2. THE SECRETARY MADE THE FOLLOWING POINTS OF INTEREST:

A. BASED ON DECLINING DRUG-RELATED ADMISSIONS TO GOVERNMENT
PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITALS OVER THE PAST TWO YEARS, THE MEXICAN DRUG
ABUSE PROBLEM IS DECREASING. AT THE VERY LEAST, HE SAID, THE
PROBLEM IS NO LONGER INCREASING. THE SECRETARY SEES DRUG ABUSE
AS A PASSING PHASE AMONG YOUTH, AKIN TO THE PHENOMENON OF
"HIPPIYISM".

B. ABOUT TEN PERCENT (OF AN UNSPECIFIED POPULATION) OF MEXICAN
YOUTH HAVE EXPERIMENTED WITH DRUGS, BUT FEW ARE HABITUAL USERS
OR ADDICTS. ABUSE AMONG GRADE SCHOOL CHILDREN IS PRIMARILY
LIMITED TO INHALANTS, WITH OLDER GROUPS BRANCHING OUT INTO
MARIJUANA, AMPHETAMINES, BARBITURATES AND TRANQUILIZERS. THERE
IS SOME MORPHINE AND, TO A LESSER EXTENT, HEROIN ADDICTION
AMONG OLDER PEOPLE.

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C. HE SAID THE GOM IS MOST CONCERNED WITH MARIJUANA USE, NOT BECAUSE MARIJUANA ITSELF IS SO HARMFUL (HE CONSIDERS ALCOHOL AND ESPECIALLY TOBACCO FAR WORSE IN THEMSELVES) BUT BECAUSE IT IS SO READILY AVAILABLE TO YOUTH AND IS SELDOM USED BY ITSELF. MARIJUAN IS OFTEN ACCOMPANIED BY POLY-DRUG ABUSE OR LEADS TO IT AND TO PARTICIPATION IN THE SUB-CULTURE OF ILLEGALITY. MARIJUANA USE IS TRADITIONALLY VERY PREVALENT AMONG THE LOWER RANKS OF MEXICAN MILITARY DRAFTEES THE SECRETARY NOTED.

HE EMPHASIZED THAT DESPITE ITS PREOCCUPATION WITH MARIJUANA HIS SECRETARIAT IS VERY MUCH CONCERNED ABOUT ABUSE OF ALL DANGEROUS DRUGS AND NARCOTICS. ALTHOUGH NARCOTICS USE IS MUCH MORE RESTRICTED, THE PHYSICAL AND MORAL DESTRUCTION IS SO MUCH GREATER.

3. COMMENT: THE MOST SIGNIFICANT PART OF THE CONVERSATION, FROM USG POINT OF VIEW, WAS UNSPOKEN BUT NONETHELESS CLEAR IMPRESSION THAT SECRETARY PLACES GREATER CREDENCE IN STATISTICS FROM HIS OWN DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH (WHICH SHOW DECLINING ADMISSIONS) THAN IN RESULTS OF RESEARCH DONE BY THE MEXICAN CENTER FOR DRUG DEPENDENCY RESEARCH (CEMEF). THIS LEFT US WITH FEELING THAT CEMEF DIRECTOR BELSASSO DOES NOT ENJOY CONFIDENCE OF HIS BOSS, AND THAT HIS POLITICAL STAR MAY BE ON THE WANE. THIS MAY BE PARTLY ATTRIBUTABLE TO FACT THAT DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH IS TELLING JIMENEZ WHAT HE WANTS TO BELIEVE; BUT BELSASSO'S HARD-DRIVING AND AT TIMES ABRASIVE METHODS OF OPERATION MAY ALSO PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN CAUSING HIM TO LOSE FAVOR IN CERTAIN CIRCLES. WE MAY GAIN ADDITIONAL INSIGHTS INTO BELSASSO'S CURRENT POSITION DURING NEXT WEEK'S DRUG DEPENDENCY CONFERENCE.

4. FOR THE RECORD, WE CONSIDER THE EVIDENCE OF DECLINING MEXICAN DRUG ADDICTION TO BE VERY SLENDER AND FRAGMENTARY INDEED, AND EXPECT THAT THE PRELIMINARY RESULTS OF CEMEF'S EPIDEMIOLOGICAL STUDY (EXPECTED BY THE END OF THIS YEAR) WILL VINDICATE OUR VIEW THAT DRUG ABUSE AND ADDICTION IS STILL IN THE INCREASE IN MEXICO.

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